[57] Chapter 4

The Court of the Mogho Naba. Tribute and Payments Due. Obligations of Mossi Subjects to their Naba.

Morning Honors Paid to the Emperor of the Mossi

The council of the emperor of the Mossi is held every morning in front of an antechamber called zango which opens out upon a very large courtyard.

The Mossi have for a long time regarded the sun as a "god." Wend'pous yan, "God shows himself," refers to the rising of the sun, but it is used in a figurative sense to refer to the emergence of the Mogho Naba. This illustrates the regard held by the Mossi people for their chief since he is compared to the star of daylight and thus to a "god."

The Mogho Naba appears each morning dressed in an ample red robe and with a red gourmousga (a kind of burnoose) folded and thrown over his shoulders. On his head he wears a cap, a fez, topped with a wazourfou sebré (literally, "silver paper" [streamers], that is to say, silver amulet). Red represents the light that comes with the appearance of the sun, while the silver on the cap represents the brilliance of the star itself.

Before the time set for the start of the ceremony, the three sogon'kassemsé (great servitors) bring into the courtyard the [58] cushion, nagpouré, and all the other insignia of office. As soon as the Mogho Naba appears, they arise and make a snapping sound with thumb and index finger to indicate that the naba is coming.

"Wend'pous yan" is also cried out by the gagando and luinsé (drummers) as soon as His Majesty sits down. The Bend'Naba [chief drummer] is the only one who does not beat his drum; instead, he rubs his finger back and forth over the waxed part of the drum head to imitate the roar of the lion. Four or five young men bearing loaded rifles take their places in front of the emperor.

Honors are rendered to the Mogho Naba in the following order.

1. The Samandé Naba, Baloum Naba, Wedranga Naba, and Simandé Nabila, as well as the Zusoabin'kassanga (chief eunuch and guardian of the emperor's household), are the first to greet His Majesty and to inquire about his health.

651 [72] (c) Fishing. Fishing in the larger water holes could take
226 place only by authorization of the canton chiefs. The day on
634 which fishing took place was treated as a holiday. All the young men in the village and their neighbors, even if the latter did not belong to the canton, came out on the day set by the canton chief and fished for the benefit of the naba. All large fish were reserved for him, and only the small ones were left to the fishermen.

This practice still prevails.

776 Other common laws. Many deities are worshipped by the
782 Mossi. Groves, fields, mountains, etc., all have their "god."
661 It often happens that the naba (canton chief), at the behest of the soothsayers, offers an animal. This may be a sheep, a goat, or even a cow, and it is offered to one or another of the deities, either for his personal interests or for those of his people, or perhaps to ask for rain. The naba dispatches some sogoné [servitor] or samand'kamba [people of the outer courtyard] to one of the villages in his canton to find a victim. The animal is taken without its owner having any right to complain or to ask for compensation. Is there not a Mossi saying to the effect, Talagh-gounda
[538] Naba'gninga the serf raises livestock for the benefit of his naba)"?

For sacrifices prescribed for the Mogho Naba, the animals are provided either by the inhabitants of the [73] town of Ouagadougou and its environs or by the canton chiefs.

Labor Service Customarily Required of the Mossi on Behalf of their Chiefs

651 Forced labor was used to cultivate the fields of the naba and to repair or construct their houses.

647 The Mogho Naba. (a) Cultivation of fields. The duty of
651 cultivating the fields of the Mogho Naba fell entirely on the Bilbalsé,
241 the residents of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba) and on all former servitors and descendants of former servitors. The Kam Naba (chief of the young men), charged with assembling the workers, had a crier announce in all the important markets that on such-and-such a day the Bilbalsé were to assemble in the emperor's

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263 The latter reserve a small share for the Zussoba [150] (chief eunuch) and the Bilbalsé (inhabitants of Bilbalogo, the section of the Baloum Naba).

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769 The next morning, Saturday, the king has a large number of cattle slaughtered and many sagbo cakes prepared. The latter are piled one on top of another to form tahinsé (mountains) in the courtyard where the daily audiences are held.

On these mountains of sagbo are placed whole quarters of sheep. Many bowls of cooked rice are put in rows beside the millet cakes.

The Larrhallé Naba, the second minister who is in command of the Samandé (the court), stands before one of the mountains of sagbo, takes a cake which he divides into three parts, and tosses them at random in different directions in the courtyard. Thus he offers food to the invisible spirits and to the manes of previous ministers who once frequented the place. During this ceremony he utters some words which may be translated as follows: "Take this sagbo and bring peace and happiness to the emperor and to his people."

After this, the Larrhallé Naba returns to his kouga (mound of stones) to make way for the Gand'Naba. The latter, too, picks up a cake and also the foot of a cow. Then the king's bodyguard, the followers of the ministers, the Bilbalssé, and the emperor's servitors make a dash for the mountains of sagbo and the rice, and there is a general scramble to get the biggest piece. It goes without saying that they come out of the fray covered with sauce, and half of the food is spilled on the ground. [151]

At this point, the ministers and their escorts depart.

Each ikanda(head of a family) calls the family elder (the patriarch) and gives him a rooster and a goat (lacking a sheep) to be sacrificed to the manes of his ancestors. The old man pronounces the following words: "Youmd yelle n'ta, ta zagla yel t'm konfo, tif reg kouin gnimassem, la sounogo, ta pam kodo, la rogom (accept these offerings on the part of X...and grant him health, happiness, and prosperity. Protect his family and grant him good harvests and many children.

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●776 It is interesting to note that the meat, whether boiled or roasted, is never seasoned with red pepper (tiparé), for the tinsé [spirits]

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would visit their anger upon those who were guilty of such an indiscretion by making them blind or at least causing them severe eye trouble in later years.

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Everyone celebrates the tinsé at home by preparing all sorts of food (sagbo, rice, corn, beans, etc.). The people stuff themselves to the point of indigestion.

Thirty days after the anniversary celebration of the funeral of Oubri's mother, the Tansoba (war minister) returns to the emperor the rope used for the date of the tinsé.

Around the fortieth day, that is, a week after the departure of the Tansoba, the Loumbila Naba comes to salute the emperor. The latter gives him a cow to be slaughtered at Widin (section of the Ouidi Naba).

A week after the departure of the Loumbila Naba, [152] the Guilingou Tengsoba pays a visit to the Mogho Naba. We have already seen that it was an ancestor of this Tengsoba who asked Naba Zoungrana to send his son, Oubri, to administer the country and to help him drive out the Habé who today live by the cliffs of Bandiagara (Sudan). The Mogho Naba is obligated to give a cow and some salt to this Tengsoba.

Then comes the turn of the Saponé Naba (nayrdin, representative of Naba Kouda) who, with his followers, receives a cow and some salt. Finally, for Bonsa Naba, Kamsaonguin Tengsoba, and Pazani Tengsoba, the Mogho Naba has a sheep killed which is served with many plates of sagbo.

It should be noted that when the Tangsob-ramba appear before the emperor they put down their laya (magic axes) and are at once brought white roosters which they are expected to kill in the timpelem (courtyard).

Thus, it is apparent that this festival has no particularly remarkable features. Its sole aim is to make peace between the living and the dead and to give everyone a chance to eat well.

641 as part of the family.

641 2. When a Moaga emigrates and settles permanently in a for-
167 eign country, either to take up trading or to study the precepts of Islam. He is forced to abandon his usual customs and to scorn ancestral ways, thus losing his personal status. If he wishes to embrace Islam, he changes his name, and if he should return to his native village, he would no longer try to be identified as a Moaga, whose customs and beliefs he no longer shares and whom he now regards as an inferior.

641 [188] As has been noted, the Moaga woman who marries a foreigner or the foreign woman who marries a Moaga subject retains her own nationality. Thus, marriage does not involve any loss of nationality. Customs may have been modified, but it is certain that even a Moaga woman who had lived abroad for a long time would soon resume the customs and practices of her own country. The same may be said of a foreign woman who might divorce her Moaga husband and return to her own land.

Naturalization. Since naturalization is unknown, children born in Mossi country of a foreign father and either a Moaga or a foreign mother remain foreign. Furthermore, since children take their father's nationality, a divorce will not affect their status.

II. Birth

842 Conception. The natives have no very well-defined idea of the
776 process of conception. In their minds, the primary cause is God (Wenam), Master of Heaven and Earth, who gives children. It seems, however, that Wendé or Wenam forces the kinkirsi (spirits) to change into a human egg when the sperm is transmitted at the time of ejaculation.

The kinkirsi are invisible beings said to resemble small children and who live near certain houses or [189] groves. Only a few favored persons can see them.

In the same connection, it is believed that ancestors or certain deceased relatives are reincarnated.

843 Pregnancy. It is known that complete cessation of menstruation and the development and darkening of the breasts are the signs of

764 554 animals, beer, etc. (see the description above). This is the second mourning.

Dakonré (bachelor). Only his father and mother shave their heads. He is wrapped in a Mossi secco and buried without further ceremony. He is not even washed.

Bi-kouré (funeral for a newborn child). If the first-born child of a young mother dies, the girl returns to her family and remains there for thirteen days. Then she comes back to her husband, accompanied by some of her relatives. The latter bring chickens and guinea fowl to be served with the millet cake brought to the girl's husband. In return, the husband has chickens and guinea fowl killed and millet cake prepared, thus making an even exchange with his in-laws.

[198] Custom requires that the girl's relatives spend a night on the road before returning to their village. Even if their village is quite near they spend the night in the bush.

It should be added that if a second child dies at birth, there is no kouré.

Pagh'sin kataré biga (childless woman). There is no ceremony. She is buried in the same manner as the bachelor.

The Existence of God, Heaven, and Hell

776 The Moaga believes in the existence of a superior being, invisible or visible (the sun has long been considered as a "god" by many of them), who created the heavens, the earth, and all living things. This being is called Wende or Wenam (from wende, "world," and nam, "chiefdom"; thus, "Master of the World").

Although the Moaga sometimes attributes his misfortunes to the evil spells of his enemies, nevertheless he recognizes that nothing can be done without the consent of God. Hence he constantly invokes the name in every circumstance of his life, especially when he makes sacrifices.

Even the makers of fetishes, magicians, and sorcerers recognize this power and frequently invoke it.

792 There are certain Mossi who make no charms or fetishes and who are neither Moslems nor Christians. They harm no one, [199] forgive those who offend them, and attribute everything that happens to them -- for good or ill -- solely

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And you do not want to let her go!
Are you perchance this child's mother or father?
You are not the God who created her."

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832 The wennega consists mostly of back-and-forth movements of the hips in slow rhythm. Various figures are performed, but there is always the same rhythm and the same swaying of the hips. The sweetheart herself begins to dance, a curious fact, since women do not usually take part in the men's dances.

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776 We have noted that another form of Mossi dance is religious, the waongo. The waongo is a mysterious being, half animal, half spirit.

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776 Origin of the waongo. Tradition has it that this being was one day found all alone on a plain. Those who first saw him took fright and ran away. They went to tell the village elders, who assembled a goodly number of young men, armed [236] with arrows and sticks, to overcome this strange being.

He was not found at the place where he had first been seen. He had moved some distance away. The villagers surrounded him, and the elders, who had brought him a rooster, began to question him: "If he should be taken to the village, would he hurt the villagers? Would he bring misfortune?" The chicken was then sacrificed, but it is told that the sacrifice was not accepted.

The elders returned to the village and brought back a white rooster (norapelga), a he-goat (boéga), and a dog (bâga). Then they addressed the waongo, saying: "We were perhaps mistaken just now. Perhaps you wanted an animal in addition to the rooster we offered to you? If, by becoming our guest, you can bring us happiness, good health, and children, accept these offerings!" They slaughtered the rooster and the goat and killed the dog. This time the sacrifices were accepted.

[532] What the waongo is. The waongo consists of a mask, usually representing the head of an animal, and a bindou (a kind of long cloak made from the bark of the béringa shrub which is soaked in water for a long time to blacken it or from baobab fibers).

773 According to tradition, he had beside him a toabga (a kind of
535 magic axe) and a tibo (a sacred object, fetish).
776 The people captured him and put him in a safe place. But of what possible use could he be to them? Nobody knew. [237] He was something unknown and fearful.

One day the people had gone off to hold the kouré (funeral observances) of an old man and were on their way back home. They were warba dancers. They were all singing as they approached the house of the waongo, who came out. The dancers were terrified and ran away. Only one of the singers had the courage to remain behind.

He went on with the songs and the waongo followed him right up to the house of the deceased, and there he began to dance.

From this it was concluded that the waongo had something to do with funerals. Since that time the waongo is summoned whenever an old man or woman of the Nioniossé (soukoaba) dies. He never dances for deceased young people.

Since the waongo or, rather, the soukou is considered to be sacred and to embody a sort of religion which possesses secrets
[198] that should not be made known to everyone, a special language -- a deformation of the môré [Mossi] language -- has been invented. It is understood only by the initiates.

535 The waongo dances to the sound of a special tom-tom, accompanied by songs and praises in the secret language. The dance is of no special interest; it involves more or less frenetic movements, such as characterize most of the dances of the indigenous peoples.

The waongo is always accompanied by a circle of young men dressed in a narrow strip of cotton, decorated with cowries, and carrying satchels at their sides. These boys make movements with their heads which [238] are precisely like those made by circus
[534] horses. In addition to the tom-tom, flute players (wissé) accompany the dances.

535 We shall now speak of the true funeral dance, called warba.
764 It is performed by men wearing skirts, a kind of net shirt dyed blue, and headdresses made of cowrie shells. A long fringe, weighted

304 563 852 day the one in charge of the circumcision, a wealthy Yarga or Mossi who has the means to feed several of the people to be circumcised, chooses a tree to serve as shelter for the operation. Rain need not be taken into account, for circumcision is always performed during the dry season from December to April, when agricultural work is at a standstill. The tree is surrounded with straw mats, forming the téoo [178] or sacred enclosure which no one who is not circumcised may come near without running the risk of being insulted and often beaten; if he should dare to step inside it, he would be stricken by the greatest misfortunes. The Peul sets out a flat stone, sacrifices a chicken in order to make the spirit of the tree benevolent toward those to be circumcised, and operates on the boys one by one. Drums are played throughout the operation to drown the cries of the victims.

852 For three days afterwards the newly circumcised boys do nothing. They rest and tend their wounds. They remain isolated from the rest [535] of the community for two or three months, sometimes even longer. Judging by the dances which close the festivities, dancing must be their primary concern during that period of time. They also thresh the millet of those who invite them to do so, but no uncircumcised person may join them, no uninitiated individual may come near them. [198] They do not speak the Mossi language at this time, but a special tongue of which they learn enough to serve them in their everyday needs. Woe to those who forget and use their native tongue; they are [551] beaten with switches made of a kind of willow. Even their names are changed, and no one may call them by their Mossi names.

The circumcised boys are divided in two groups, one "male" and one "female." One of the groups bears the name of the hyena (kwara in their language) and the other is called masalro, whose French equivalent we do not know. The hyena group must strain their wits to snatch food, even from the other circumcised boys, who are kept constantly on the alert. The other group makes improper gestures during the dance.

852 293 776 481 The circumcised boys are covered with gray dust to alter their appearance completely. A tail is fastened to the back of their breechcloth, hanging to the ground. It is made of plaited cotton thread and ends in a pompon. Its function is to drive off the kikirsi spirits, who apparently do not like circumcised persons. The boys walk bent over and leaning on sticks like old men. This is done to test their obedience and to see if they listen carefully to what they are told.

852 [302] shaved strips on top of the head, while the sides are shaved similarly in semi-circular strips. On the seventh day, people who were previously circumcised bring chickens to sacrifice to the spirits of the paths so that all will go well, but the newly circumcised take no part in the proceedings. The children wash, oil themselves, and put on their 852 beautiful clothes. Everything is brand new, the breechcloth, the trousers, the shirt, the blanket, and the headgear. The belt is adorned 292 with a knife in a leather sheath and with a needle case which has at 301 the end a tuft of leather strips with cowries attached to them. They [776] hold a cow's tail, also adorned with cowries, to drive off the scheuyan spirits who dislike little rascals and people who dress too well. Both wrists are adorned with copper bracelets. Needless to say, this flashy new outfit with its cowries that clang like bells lures the eye and bewitches the young boys, who decide to be circumcised at the first opportunity so they too may eat well and wear beautiful clothes.

852 [48] /44/ The circumcised boys continue to walk bent over, leaning on their sticks, but their crude staff is replaced with two sticks decorated with burnt designs and tied together. They no longer wear a tail. They go to greet the chiefs, and they thank those who have given them gifts. They walk to the sound of the large drum, since the bindré is forbidden at circumcision ceremonies, and sing plaintive chants to the spirits. They parade in the marketplace and display their clothes in the villages. [535] They dance before the chiefs, and their dances are very graceful indeed. They dance in unison to the beat of the drum, making the same gestures all together or two by two, varying the figures in accordance with the beat. After seven days the festivities are over, and they all return to their families and take up everyday life as though nothing had happened.

We shall now study this everyday life.

/45/ BOOK III. DAILY WORK AND TRADES

Chapter 1. Occupations of a Mossi

221 The Mossi are essentially cultivators, and it may be said that no
241 Mossi who works at a trade will fail to cultivate his fields when the

124 The problem is aggravated by the fact that the Mossi possess no religious theories and are not in the habit of discussing their beliefs. They are bewildered by the slightest "Why," the most elementary "how is it so." To fulfill the needs of our European minds, therefore, it proved necessary to put a little order and clarity into the ideas we gleaned here and there. In this area especially we have avoided as much as possible any tendency to systematize, and we can say that there is nothing of our own in the two chapters that follow. We have listened to the natives, elicited explanations, asked questions, and made note of the answers. We shall now transcribe the results. Of course the answers did not always agree, and we /78/ were forced to make choices on the basis of those testimonies which appeared most worthy of trust. The disagreements were on matters of detail only, and on the whole the statements persistently agreed on the most important points. In any case, whenever a serious doubt arises, we shall be careful to point it out.

● 776 576 How could Lt. Marc ever write, "We do not believe that the Mossi have the concept of a single God and Creator"? (1) The idea of God

1. Marc, Au pays des Mossi /In Mossi Country/, p. 158.

is everywhere to be found among this people. The merest wish, the simplest greeting, includes the name of God. When someone is going away, the person who is leaving and those who are staying hold the following exchange: "May God be with me," says the one who goes; "May God see you home! May God cause you to return! May God move your legs!" answer those who remain.

Persons who receive gifts tell their benefactor: "May God keep you! May God cause you to remain a long time (on this earth)! May God reward you! May God repay you!"

If a friend is seen wearing a new garment, this occasions another greeting: "May God allow you to wear it out before you discard it!"

If he is eating, he is told: "May God cause you to profit by it!"

If he comes to announce the birth of an heir: "God grant that you may suspend him from your shoulder!" /Tr., Mossi children from age [854] two or thereabouts are often carried astraddle the hip and holding on to the shoulder./

If he is leaving to return on the same day: "May God grant us the pleasure of talking to each other!"

776 At the end of the day, the Mossi greet each other as follows: "May
576 God grant you a tommorrow!" To which they must reply: "May God give you a good morrow!"

On festive days those who meet tell each other: "May God lead you to the next year! May God allow you to see a new year!"

God gives health, maintains it, and restores it to the sick:

"May God give you health!" they wish each other, "May God increase your health! May God make you happy!"

Those who are in danger, or ill, are told:

"May God keep you from misfortune! May God restore your health! May God come with health and a cooling breeze!"

When death has struck, sympathy is offered to the family as follows:

"May God hinder the day (of death)!"

An arriving horseman is told: "May God help you dismount!" And to the man who has just lost a horse: "May God restore your tethering post!" (For only those who own a horse have a tethering post.)

776 When asked, "Who gives power to the medicines and to the amulets?" a Mossi invariably replies that it is God.

God knows everything and is called upon as a witness: "By God!" If unjustly accused, the Mossi calls upon God: "God sees inside me, /79/ and He knows that there is nothing there!" And if someone does not know the name for something, he adds immediately, "But God knows it."

God disposes of everything, and the Mossi often say among themselves:

"If God grants me the day after tomorrow, I shall come"; "he was about to fall, but God came to his aid"; "we start talking in the morning and request God's protection."

God is everywhere, and it is impossible to hide from Him. God preserves us, and one naba who bore no trace of Islamism once told me: "We are in God's hand; we are God's sheep, and He watches over us as my son watches over my own sheep." It sounds like an echo of the Gospels: "I am the good shepherd." It would be easy to furnish other examples. God is superior to all spirits. He created them and He sends them to man, but He did not make them evil. Nevertheless, God may help us obtain revenge from our enemies, and His sacred name often recurs in curses: "May God suspend from your neck the bag of poverty! May God destroy you! May He destroy him completely! May God burn him in the fire!" (2) Every

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2. We owe this list of formulas to the kindness of Fr. Thueux, the European who undoubtedly knows the Mossi language most intimately. May we express here our hearty thanks.

sacrifice includes a curse against enemies.

776 Beyond these wishes, however, no prayer is addressed to God
directly; no sacrifice is offered to Him without mention of spirits.
782 Yet, as we shall see in the following chapter, the invocations of the sacrificial formula are addressed mostly to God, and when the sacrifice is over all those who have participated in it greet the sacrificer with these words: "May God accept your sacrifice; may God receive it!"

776 But who is this God? Is he one or many? Has he a body, or is he spirit? Where does he dwell? So many questions which a Mossi has never asked himself and which leave him momentarily bewildered. "Is God one or many?" "I don't know" is the usual answer. If one insists, he says that God is one. But a difficulty arises: "Why then, in sacrifices, do you invoke God-king male and God-king female?" Again: "I don't know; this is what our fathers said."

776 Does God have a body? Yes, assuredly, for only a highly practiced
821 intelligence can conceive of a pure spirit. But what is this body like? "I don't know." Where is God? "Everywhere." But does he occupy a special place? "God is the sun."

776 Do they identify God with the sun? It is difficult for us to establish
782 a settled opinion on the subject. They do seem to grant the identifi-
821 cation, and in the course of sacrifices—after all, their sacrificial formulas must fit their concept of divinity—they offer God water for his rising and pour it to the east, water for his retiring and pour it to the west. In a quarrel the weaker party says: "God is my witness that I have not harmed you; God will pay you back in kind," and points toward the sun. Sacrifices are never /80/ offered in the middle of the night; but then they are not made in the middle of the day either, and they may be offered in the evening, when the sun has dipped below the horizon. The names for God and for the sun are
776 different. Wendé is the proper name for God, Wennam indicates
821 God's power (Wende nam). These words have no plural and thus indicate a belief in God's oneness. The sun is called Winniga, or

776 821 Wintoro at noon when it scorches the earth (Winniga toro). It must be added, however, that sometimes the sun is called Na /Naba/ Wendé, "God-king." At night God is supposed to retire into his hut, since the sun is no longer visible, and yet he continues to be everywhere. "If you commit an offense during the night, God knows about it." The Mossi are likely to say when the sun stands at the zenith, "It is God who makes the sun scorch us today." Thus they do seem, in practice, to make a distinction between God and the sun. The sun is God's dwelling, but it is not God. But what inconsistency in all this!

Natural phenomena are sometimes attributed to God. Lightning kills those who have done evil, it kills livestock wrongly obtained through fraud or theft, and it is sent in punishment by God ... unless it is sent by an enemy. Amulets and fetishes derive their power from 776 God, as already mentioned, and the same applies to medicinal remedies. Illness is usually attributed to an evil spirit who must be [753] appeased, but sometimes it is also attributed to God. The Mossi do not seem to grant a soul to inanimate objects, but only to animate beings: plants, animals, men. Yet, as a rule, inexplicable or abnormal phenomena are attributed to spirits dwelling in inanimate objects.

There are three kinds of spirits: the tisé (plural of tiga, "tree"), who dwell exclusively in trees; the kikirsi (plural of kikiriga), or spirits proper; and the tangamma (plural of tangandé), the protective spirits of the villages who dwell in sacred groves.

The tisé reside preferably in those trees which stand near the huts, but some of them also dwell in the bush. They have a special liking for the tamarind tree and bastard mahogany, but they are not at all fond of the doubalé, which shelters bats. At night they leave their dwelling and go into the huts. Their bodies are human in form, but invisible to the common run of mankind. They are much taller and fatter than men, and they are black and walk with their feet up in the air and their heads down to the ground.

776 753 At night they wander about, and their presence is betrayed by a darkening of the doorway; they are so fat that they blot out the light. Woe to the man who has no water in his soukala, who has saved no millet beer! The tiga who comes and finds nothing causes pimples to grow all over the man's body; this is the illness characteristic of the tisé. He is fortunate if he gets away with so little, for the tisé can afflict him with many other diseases or even kill him. If the tiga manages to touch someone, the place touched will swell; if someone

776 makes noise in the bush under certain leafy trees, his cheeks will swell
753 out. The tisé talk, even during the day. It is their voices which are heard when the wind stirs the leaves. We had /81/ papaw seeds planted all around our dwelling. They had sprouted and grown well; the fruit was already ripening. One morning, no papaw trees were left in
[824] Koupéla! The naba had decreed that these were talking trees, that they would cause illness to those who had them in their soukala ... and the papaws had been cut down!

776 Fortunately, it is possible to protect oneself against the tisé. First,
782 those trees which shelter them may be felled, and the spirits will move elsewhere. Some very beautiful trees vanish thus from the villages. The tisé may also be appeased with sacrifices. Does this result in tree cult, dendrolatry? Indeed not! The Mossi clearly make the distinction between the tree and the spirit that inhabits it, and they sacrifice to the spirit. Sometimes also, a tree was planted on the
[769] grave of the elder who founded the village, and sacrifices are made to the ancestral spirit at the foot of the tree. Finally, there are fetishes more powerful than the tisé. It is enough to know which roots and barks the tisé do not like, to steep them in water, and to place the pot at the door of the hut. When a tiga sees this fetish, he invariably runs away. Some Peul are said to have the power to distinguish between those trees where spirits dwell and those where they do not, and to kill the former trees merely by rubbing them with butter! This must be done in a special way.

776 The kikirsi are imps, red or black all over, and only a few centi-
754 meters high. Their body has the same shape as ours, but it is much nimbler and more tenuous—something ethereal and impalpable that only the sorcerers can discern. The latter call them with a low
[534] whistle or by shaking a peculiarly shaped gourd that looks like a handle ending in a sphere. This gourd is dried without being opened, and the seeds gather in the sphere. The sorcerer makes noise by shaking this instrument, and the kikirsi flock to him singing.

776 There are good and evil kikirsi, and the good ones only do evil when forced to do so; for instance, when someone puts pepper in their sauce. They abhor pepper but they love honey, and every good housewife who wishes to preserve her honey covers it carefully with pepper to prevent the kikirsi from eating it. They are inordinately fond of sesame, and they dote on millet cakes (samsa); every woman who makes millet cakes offers them a few. People who eat samsa while walking are careful to drop a few crumbs to the ground. On the

776 other hand, the kikirsi do not drink fermented millet beer, but they must be offered some before the yeast (da'nodo) is added. They have their preferences like human beings. They know hatred and jealousy, and sometimes they even kill one another. They are said to have two 776 sexes, to marry, and to procreate. They even have the special faculty 845 of always bearing twins, and this is why twins are called by their 551 name and are dedicated to them; it is believed that spirits dwell within them.

776 The birth of twins causes their mother much trouble. Formerly 845 both were sometimes put to death, while at other times only one was killed. When a woman bears twins, she builds at the door of her hut 782 a tiny miniature house where the spirits dwelling /82/ within her children will take shelter. Three times a year if her means allow it, in the spring, in the winter, and at the height of the rainy season, or at least once a year, a guinea hen must be offered to the kikirsi. This fowl is sacrificed exclusively to them. On that day they must also be offered their favorite foods, and this means that honey, sesame, and millet cakes must be purchased, that beer must be prepared and a jar saved without yeast, that millet mush has to be cooked, and especially that no pepper be added to the sauce. Otherwise the husband, [753] wife, or children will be afflicted with a dreadful eye disease, for such is the illness which the kikirsi have the power of visiting on human beings.

776 As children, twins may wear only the kankabra, a garment made 845 of black and whitish threads, the characteristic clothing of the kikirsi. Happily, they are later allowed to dress as they please. If the mother dies, the twins offer the sacrifices themselves and build the small hut that serves as a dwelling for their little spirit. The later born twin is considered the older of the two. They both wear the same bracelet and share everything given to them. It is not considered proper to make a gift to one without giving the same thing to the other. Actually, these customs are to be found in Africa from Bambara country to Tanganyika.

776 To return to the kikirsi themselves, they are present everywhere. In the bush they are fond of termite nests, large and small. They 241 also like open spaces. They are to be found around the villages; there are ponds set apart for the kikirsi, wells considered to belong to them. There are spirits watching over every field, and before sowing, as also before harvesting millet, the master of the field sacrifices a chicken to the spirit on a stone in the middle of the field. The

776 241 kikiriga, in turn, are to ward off anything that might harm the crop, birds, caterpillars, thieves, and the like, and to fill with millet a granary of the size drawn on the ground with ashes at the time of harvest. If the kikiriga has properly carried out his duties, he gets another chicken when all the grain has been gathered in a heap.

776 [843] Pregnant women are under the protection of a special kikiriga, and small children have one of their own to ward off illness and danger. Do we not say ourselves that a special Providence watches over the very young?

776 828 [577] Actually, everyone has his kikiriga. Some have an evil one, and those are the people who quarrel with everybody, the ones who are never successful, whose livestock dies, for the kikirsi often kill the goats, sheep, and horses that die of illness. Other people have a good kikiriga, and for them everything goes well; they were born under a lucky star. These are the engaging, sweet, good-natured people [513] who get rich and who have many children. When a Mossi lies down to sleep in his hut, he rests his head on a stone or a small mound of beaten earth. This is where his kikiriga dwells, and from time to time, especially when he feels the need for special protection, he [782] sacrifices a guinea hen or sometimes even a goat, with the understanding that the spirit will chase away all fellow spirits who might want to harm him and will avert all illness and all danger from his path.

776 778 825 /83/ The tangandé is a spirit who has the shape of an animal and who is regarded as the protector of a village. The term is also extended to designate the spirit's place of residence, usually the sacred grove but sometimes a mere stone or even an open space. The tangandé may be a crocodile, a boa, a leopard, a turtle, a deer, a hare, etc. The animal is sacred to the whole village and may not be killed in the sacred grove, but it may be killed elsewhere, even a short distance from the thicket.

776 755 The tangandé is a guardian spirit because it protects men and sends its servants to accompany the village people on trips when they request it to do so. The natives incessantly turn to it for protection, and the sorcerers incessantly refer those who consult them to the tangandé to obtain cures and to request the release of souls held captive by evil sorcerers. When someone dies, sacrifices are made to the 776 782 tangandé with requests to protect the survivors and to ward off illness. [774] When souls leave the body during sleep, they often go to the sacred grove. Anyone may sacrifice to the tangandé and in the tangandé.

776 782 The naba does so more than anyone else; on the Day of the Dead (basra) he always makes sacrifices there, and usually the village elders accompany him.

776 778 A village may have several tangandé /sic/, but the protective animal or animals—most often there are two—are the same in all the sacred groves, of which there are as many as there are tangandé /sic/. Nothing may be taken from a sacred grove; everything in it is sacred. No wood may be cut down, and it is forbidden even to gather dead wood which has fallen by itself. By the same token, the dry grass may not be set afire, not even in the area around the grove. If all precautions have been duly taken and fire nevertheless spreads to the sacred grove, nothing can be done and the village people are not held responsible. On the other hand, outsiders are prevented, by force if necessary, from taking anything whatever from the sacred grove. If the outsider is powerful and cannot be restrained, expiatory sacrifices are offered after his departure.

776 754 The tangandé is thus a guardian animal, and yet some tangamma retaliate by afflicting the guilty party with diseases. If one of the sorcerers who eat souls (seuya) offers gifts to a tangandé, the latter will help him and refuse to restore the soul which has been entrusted to it, unless more substantial gifts are forthcoming. One may pray to a tangandé and make a vow, for example, promise it a goat or sheep if it kills a designated enemy. The goat is purchased pending the enemy's death. Sometimes the tangandé takes its time and [781] several years go by. The spirit is chided and told to hurry, and finally decides to do away with the person in question. Then the goat is sacrificed.

776 778 787 Some people say that all tangamma come from the Fada N'Gourma region, where the father of all tangamma is to be found. It is the sorcerer's task to point out the tangamma and the place of their residence. Once, for example, a village had just been founded. The elders had found a piece of ground propitious to agriculture, in the vicinity of water, and had built their huts. At the beginning /84/ of the winter season, when the time came for sowing, they shared out the neighboring bush and proceeded to lay out their fields. One day a leopard driven out of its lair took to flight before their eyes and repaired to a thicket. Immediately the people were called, the thicket surrounded and searched thoroughly. No leopard was found. On the following day the same episode took place in the same spot. This happened three times, and every time it proved impossible to

776 find the leopard, which had suddenly vanished. The puzzled elders,
778 like the good Mossi they were, consulted the sorcerer who stated that
787 the leopard was their tangandé, and the thicket to which it had repaired was its sacred grove. He also prescribed the sacrifices to be offered.

776 As the blood of the victims flowed, the children saw a turtle
787 walking toward the sacred grove and tried to seize it. The elder prevented then from doing so and again resorted to the superior knowledge of the sorcerer to find out what this might possibly mean: a turtle entering the sacred grove during a sacrifice to the tangandé! The sorcerer pronounced the following oracle: the turtle is the child of the tangandé and thus becomes sacred to our village. Since that time the village has had the leopard and turtle as its tangandé /sic/.

776 The tangandé may actually be a stone or a tree which is regarded as the guardian of the village, but this is more unusual. The tangandé might perhaps be considered as a sort of village totem. If we take Salomon Reinach's definition of the totem as "the animal, plant, or more rarely mineral or heavenly body which the clan acknowledges as an ancestor, a protector, and a rallying sign," (3) we find that the

3. Salomon Reinach, Cultes, mythes et religion /Cults, Myths, and Religion/, p. 81.

tangandé is usually an animal, a guardian animal, but that it is not regarded as an ancestor and it does not serve as a rallying sign, for
[621] several villages may have the same tangamma /sic/—many have the crocodile and boa—without considering this as a bond between them.

Monseigneur Le Roy defines totemism as follows: "An institution consisting essentially of a magic pact, which reflects and constitutes a kinship, mystical and supernatural in nature, by which an invisible spirit in the visible shape of an animal, or, in exceptional cases, of a plant, mineral, or astral body, is associated with an individual, a family, a clan, a tribe, or a secret society for the purpose of reciprocal services." (4) This definition does not correspond to the

4. Mgr. Le Roy, La religion des primitifs /Primitive Religion/, p. 132.

776 tangandé in every detail either, for only the village may have a tangandé, and there does not seem to be any magic pact unless the sacrifices offered are considered as such a pact, which does not seem justified. The tangandé-animal is never sacrificed, and no special initiation takes place.

774 761 [775] The closest thing to totemism among the Mossi seems to be their concept of the human soul, and yet it is not, properly speaking, a totem in the sense indicated by these authors. Every man has a soul that lives on after death and takes the name of kyma, while during life it is called siga. Shortly before death it takes the name of toullé [197] /85/ in Ouagadougou or toundo in Koupela, but siga, toundo, kyma are one and the same thing, one and the same principle. According to the Mossi, this soul is an animal, invisible of course, a snake, a crocodile, a deer, a hare. The soul is related to this animal, it belongs to the same family, so that to kill a snake or a crocodile in a village where the soul of the inhabitants is a snake or a crocodile is to kill an inhabitant of the village; every individual related to the snake has a snake in the village to represent thim, and he will die when his soul-animal dies.

774 784 Yet, and this runs counter to the definitions of totemism, the individual expects no aid from this animal, never sacrifices to it, and never kills it himself to renew the kinship pact. A person whose soul is a crocodile is forbidden to kill crocodiles in his own village, but he may kill them elsewhere, although he may never eat them, while he may kill the tangandé animal as long as he does so outside the tangandé, and he may eat it at any time. Some people, when they [766] find a dead soul-animal of their family near their village, render it funeral honors, weep, wail, and bury it as one of their own, but they offer it no gifts and hold no kouré. Generally it is merely covered with earth. The most widespread soul-animals are a kind of snake [582] (bosombodro) and the crocodile. Several families may have the same one, and marriage, although exogamic, is not forbidden between members of these families.

774 754 The soul may leave the body and in fact leaves it often, especially during the night. If children had a good time in a certain place, if they enjoyed themselves at someone's house, the soul returns there at night. This is when the worst is to be feared from the sorcerers; they may seize the soul by surprise, and its unfortunate owner will die.

794 Later, in 1917, in my book Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, since the few attempts that I had made in Yatenga to find this cult of the sun had given no results, I wrote (page 277):

"The sun is called ouindigho or ouindigha in Mossi (tili in Bambara). The word has a certain relationship with Ouendé, and the word Ouendé seems to be part of the construction of the word ouindigho. In any case, the Mossi and the Foulsé of Yatenga make no sacrifices to the sun. I interrogated in vain several important people about the details given by Lieutenant Desplagnes, pages 275 and 276 of his work, Plateau Central Nigérien about a cult of the sun in Mossi. It is true that these details concern the religious society of the Ouango and the villages where the members of this society would be operating: this would apply to villages of the Residency of Kaya (such as, Mané, Boujéma, etc.). One could thus pursue the studies in Kaya. /32/ In any case, the cult of the sun is totally unknown in Yatenga."

In my conclusion, I denied that there was a cult of the sun among the Mossi of Yatenga, while I admitted that one might be able to find this cult in other parts of Mossi country, particularly in the Residency (today, the circle) of Kaya.

794 114 The question was at that point when Father Eugène Mangin published a study on the Mossi in Anthropos ("Les Mossi. Essai sur les us et coutumes du Soudan Occidental" /The Mossi, an Essay on the Usages and Customs of Western Sudan/, Vienna, 1916), a study in which the author, who lived for a long time in Ouagadougou among the central Mossi, brought most of his effort to bear on a study of the religious life of his charges. It may well be that Father Mangin's observations touch upon the question of sun worship in that country in a definitive manner, better than Binger and Desplagnes had done.

794 The Mossi, says Father Mangin, in their sacrifices to Ouendé, offer water for his rising and pour it to the east, and offer water for his setting and pour it to the west. In an argument, the weakest will also say: "God (Ouendé) is my witness that I have done you no harm, God [776] will give it back to you," and he will point to the sun. Thus, Ouendé, the principal god of the Mossi, is indeed a sun god, and indeed the Mossi worship, in him, the sun.

Does this mean that Ouendé cannot also be a god of the sky or of the atmosphere, as I maintained in my Noir du Yatenga? Certainly not, and indeed Father Mangin mentions that Ouendé commands

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769 destroy the yield. And, depending on his attentions to them, they can give or take away the good health necessary to carry him through the arduous activity of the rainy season when work is hardest, the granaries nearly empty, and food in short supply. Separate ancestral spirits look out for different aspects of the well-being of the individual. Satisfying their various sacrificial requirements is both expensive and time-consuming, but their good will is essential to the success of the farmer, and it is in his own best interest to be attentive to their needs.

THE EARTH CUSTODIANS

793 A close relationship exists between the control of the water supply upon which the agricultural economy depends and the authority of the 776 earth custodians in their role as intermediaries with the several manifestations of Wennam, the Mossi deity. The deity itself is somewhat aloof from the affairs of men, but through his specific manifestations and with the intercession of the earth custodians (*Tenga Soba namba*), descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the Yatenga, the individual propitiates Wennam in order to control the various forces of the natural and supernatural environment upon which the success of his economic or social endeavor is dependent. Tenga Wende, his terrestrial manifestation, and Tido Wende, which gives life to the vegetable kingdom, are the aspects of Wennam which are most frequently evoked; but Siguiri Wende, the deified first ancestor of the Mossi; Ki Wende, the millet god; and Saga Wende, the rain deity, are also frequently called upon for help.

793 Each Mossi village in the Yatenga is divided into one or more areas, each of which is in the "command" of one of the village earth custodians. [36] Each of these areas contains both the dwelling of the Savadogo lineage of the earth custodian and the residence and farmlands of various "true" Mossi lineages. The head of each lineage maintains the good will of the terrestrial manifestation of the deity through the intercession of the earth custodian who "commands" his land. In some instances a lineage may own land under the authority of two different earth custodians; in this case offerings must be made at the shrine (*tenga*) of each.

793 The good fortune which may be secured through obeisance to the terrestrial manifestation of the deity (Tenga Wende) involves both 782 sacrifices and gifts of money to the earth custodian and abstention from acts offensive to the earth. For example, sexual intercourse may take [833 place only in a private courtyard or within the house. Violation of this 783] rule defiles the land and must be expiated through a special sacrifice and the payment of a fine to the earth custodian. Any lost object found in the 778 public way or in the bush is in the custody of the earth deity and must be turned over to the earth custodian to await the inquiry of the proper owners. If such objects are unclaimed, they are given to Tenga Wende

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by being placed on his altar, where they become part of the earth symbols (*tiinse*). As a result, these altars are piled high with old sardine cans, bicycle parts, remnants of clothing, unusual stones and scraps of metal, baskets, wooden implements, and weapons, which are left there to decompose slowly and return to the earth. Travelers in a strange village need never fear that their property will be stolen if they deposit it near the altar of the earth custodian.

When a farmer wishes to clear a part of the bush which has previously been unused, he must first ask permission of the earth custodian and make a present to the earth deity. If he wishes to use the land again the following year, the request and the gift must be repeated. Such a field may be passed on to his descendants, who have a right to the land so long as they acknowledge each year the authority of the earth custodian. If a new well is to be dug, his authorization must be requested, and his advice may also be asked for the proper place to seek water. The wise Mossi farmer consults the earth custodian frequently about his agricultural activities. He also reports anything that he may have done to alter the condition of his farmlands or the surrounding bush, not because each individual act is of such great importance, but because maintaining good relations with the custodian of the earth is in the interest of his own economic security.

OTHER ASPECTS OF RELIGION

Other descendants of the original inhabitants of the Yatenga, the Bogoba, are especially charged with the propitiation of Tido Wendé, the vegetal manifestation of Wennam. In addition to the many manifestations of Wennam and the complex organization of priests and ceremonial designed for his propitiation, many other forces inhabit the unseen world of the Mossi. Indeed, to the observer their number and variety might at first seem to be almost as great as the number of Mossi with whom he may discuss these beings. Each man's description of these supernatural beings varies in terms of his subjective reaction resulting either from direct experience of them or from stories he has heard concerning their behavior. In contrast to Wennam, whose disposition is essentially benevolent so long as he is properly propitiated, these lesser supernatural beings are more frequently malicious and always more difficult to control. Perhaps for these reasons they are not worshiped. The Mossi's concern is not to propitiate them but to neutralize their evil intentions by the use of protective charms (*tim*).

The "bush," the unused land lying beyond the farms, is the least-known aspect of the Mossi natural environment. This is especially true of those far areas of the bush where even the authority of the earth custodians does not extend and where unknown spirits dwell. For although the

bush is included in the orderly universe which the Mossi have fabricated, it exists at the periphery and is a thing to be feared. The name of this unknown and unowned part of the bush is synonymous with fear. Dreams in which an individual sees frightening images are called "bush creeping up" (*weogo doore*) or "bush traps you" (*weogo n'yoko fo*). These phrases are also used to describe the emotional shock, the feeling of fear, elicited by the unexpected sight of a frightening object like a corpse or a lion.

Most important among the supernatural beings inhabiting the bush are the twin spirits (*kikirdisi*). Living in pairs or in larger groups, they inhabit the bush, caves, baobab trees, and certain dense thickets of underbrush. While specific details vary, it is generally conceded that they are small, about a foot tall, black like the Mossi, and of both sexes. Their social organization is like that of men: each group is ruled over by a twin spirit-chief (*Kikirdisi Naba*).

Twin children are always regarded as the emissaries of the twin spirits. Shortly after the birth of twins their mother takes a present of food to a place where the twin spirits are known to dwell. Leaving the gift and expressing her thanks, she also makes it clear to the twin spirits that if they have any sort of malicious intent in sending her their children they might as well take them back immediately, since she will tolerate no foolishness. If, through her new children, they plan to torment her, they should save their efforts and desist at once. While the twin spirits are frequently mischief-makers, they are more frivolous than malicious and essentially neither good nor evil. The death of newborn twins is accepted with relief, for it is believed certain that the twin spirits have been thwarted in their mischievous intent and have conceded defeat.

THE ECONOMIC AND CEREMONIAL CYCLE

A brief description of the economic cycle and the ceremonials which mark its phases will serve to illustrate the way the Mossi perceive their relationship to the forces of their natural, supernatural, and social milieux and the methods by which they seek to assure their well-being through control of these forces. The year is usually divided into twelve moons whose names refer either to the principal economic activity of the season or to a ceremonial which accompanies it.

The first moon of the Mossi year is called "Gambo" after the name of the village which celebrates its first rain-making ceremony (*Tengana*) at this time. Although the rains are still five or six months away, this ritual marks the beginning of the new economic cycle. Each household which possesses land controlled by the earth custodian sends one of its young girls with an offering of millet gruel to place at the altar of Tenga Wende, the terrestrial manifestation of the deity. The earth custodian advises

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Tenga Wende of the desire for a good growing year and gives each girl a small part of the wet earth near the shrine; this represents the now sanctified soul (*shiga*) and is placed under the granary from which the millet seeds for the new crop will be taken.

Then those who possess land controlled by the earth custodian organize a hunt for his benefit. The following day, the earth custodian visits each lineage which possesses fields in areas of the bush under his custodianship. He is given calabashes filled with millet gruel, which he pours as a libation on the earth, asking Tenga Wende to grant good health, heavy rains, and a successful harvest to the household. As the libation is poured, the women try to catch a little in their own calabashes of gruel, which they then pour as their sacrifice. Because the millet from the granaries of good harvests is lucky, other women want to try to catch a little of it in their own offerings; thus the libations spill from one calabash into another as they fall on the earth.

The second moon is called "Bega" after the ceremonial which coincides with the first labor in the fields, the clearing and burning which precedes planting. After making a sacrifice at his own altar, the earth custodian goes to the residence of the neighboring priest (*Boga*) specifically charged with the propitiation of the vegetal manifestation of the deity. This visit symbolizes the interdependent relationship of the two priests and the supernatural powers which they control. The *Boga* then repeats the libations made during the previous ritual, but this time the offerings of millet gruel are made to Tido Wende, the force which gives life to the plants, rather than to the earth.

A sacrifice to Pogo Wende, the specific manifestation of Tenga Wende which guards a farmer's fields, is usually made after they have been cleared and prepared for planting. Either before or after the sowing of the first seeds, the farmer asks the earth custodian to sacrifice a sheep or a goat to the field deity, requesting good health, heavy rains, and a rich harvest. This sacrifice (*Pogo Mande*) is the final aspect of the ceremonial preparations for the new economic cycle. It is designed to enlist the benevolence not only of Pogo Wende but also of the twin spirits which inhabit the field. If the twins are well disposed toward the farmer, they will protect the soul (*ki shiga*) of his millet stand from the twin spirits from neighboring fields who might try to steal it. Like the ancestral spirits, the twin spirits send a high wind into a field, blowing the ripening grains from the stalk and liberating their "souls" (*shiise*), which are then captured to enrich the spirits' own fields.

The third moon of the year is called "Cundiba Bega." The fourth, which usually corresponds with the European month of June, is called "unaccompanied" (Quizale), referring to the fact that no ceremonial is observed during its phase. The hard work in the fields is begun at this

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The next moon, called "Tido," is the occasion for a ceremony thanking Wennam, through his terrestrial and vegetal manifestations, for his support during the growing season and for the rich harvests that have been received. Though it is directed by the custodians of the earth, it is their auxiliaries, the Bogaba, who officiate and who sacrifice at the altars to Tido Wende. After they have finished, others may offer a chicken as thanks for successful harvests or for the birth of a child.

At the appearance of the next moon the ceremony called "Filiga" is celebrated, thanking the ancestors of each lineage for their protection during the hard months of the rainy season. The initial sacrifices are made by the village chief both at the shrine to the spirits of the former chiefs and at the ancestral shrine of his lineage. Because their offerings are made to powerful spirits, it is wiser not to refer directly to them by name. They are called *Kikirigo Na Maore*, which means "twin dance." The twin spirits, like the ancestral spirits (*kiemse*), give children. Thus, through indirection a "charged" word is avoided by calling the sacrifice after an analogous but less powerful force. The specific purpose of the first sacrifice is to ask the protection and the assistance of the spirits of the former chiefs during the dangerous period which is to follow. The ancestral spirits of the villagers are then propitiated, and individuals who fail to perform the sacrifices properly may be punished by their ancestors. It is also believed that the ancestors may try to call some of the members of the lineage to join them at this time.

The sacrifices are made by the children of the daughters of the lineage (*Yasenamba*), whose permissive relationship with their mother's kinsmen is paralleled by their relationship to the ancestral spirits of their lineage. The lineage head presents the first chicken for sacrifice. Its throat is slowly cut as it is offered to the "twin" (*kikirigo*), as the "first ancestor" of the lineage is called—again through indirection, for even if the name of the first ancestor were known, it would be presumptuous of his descendants to call him by name. A chicken is then sacrificed to the "old ancestors" of the great-grandfather's generation, to the ancestors of the grandfather's generation, and to those of the fathers' generation who are deceased. As each chicken's throat is cut, the ancestors are thanked for their protection throughout the rainy season and requested to continue to look out for the welfare of their descendants during the months of the dry season which follow. Other men of the lineage may then give chickens to be sacrificed.

The final aspect of the ritual closing of the economic year is the ceremony called "Na Poosum," or "chief's salutation." It is essentially a social occasion. The homage to the central political authority made at Kom Filiga is now complemented on the village level. The elders of each lineage go to the village chief with presents of millet and assurances of

000 We are now finished with Mossi industries, not because this work is complete or definitive of course, nor because I have listed and thoroughly studied all this people's trades. I have said enough, however, to draw a significant outline /537/ of these industries and to show that they are flourishing. We may now proceed to trading.

438 443 Among the Mossi, as everywhere else in West Africa, one must distinguish the internal trade of the territory from its external trade.

As among other Blacks, the internal trade formerly was, and still is, ensured by village markets which are held at the most important localities on set days, for example every three days, every five days, etc. Thus at Ouagadougou, before the arrival of the Whites, the market was held every three days. Now it is a daily affair.

443 782 At every village where a market was held, there was a "market chief" named by the village chief. The market chief performed a sacrifice for the market. On a large consecrated stone he killed a chicken, a goat, or a sheep which he provided himself. [776] The animal was offered to the sky divinity (Ounam) to preclude fights on the market place. When this was over, our chief gave a hand to Ounam in his pacifying role, with the aid of a club if necessary.

443 All internal and external products of the territory were retailed at those markets, largely by women whom the Blacks, as we know, are in the habit of sending to market with surplus goods to sell. We shall not dwell on the internal Mossi trade, which is the same as in all black countries, a small retail trade nourished and vitalized by the external trade. Let us, therefore, proceed to the latter.

439 The external Mossi trade is the usual trade of the Sudan, which we have already described and which operates from north to south and south to north. Livestock is led toward the south, kola nuts are brought toward the north, salt is brought back toward the south, etc. We should add to this the cotton strips which constitute one of the important Mossi products (they are made by the Yarsé and by the Mossi themselves, as we saw). Those cotton strips, like livestock, are taken south where cotton is poorly grown.

778 whose ancestors had ruled the soil of the territory. In the name of
782 the Moro Naba, he entrusted him with the task of offering all those gifts to the Earth so that the latter might favor the sovereign. Ouagadougou Naba performed the sacrifice before the door of his soukala.

When the Moro Naba went to war, he also ordered the chief
[727] of Ougadougou to perform a sacrifice to the Earth. The bara indicated what should be sacrificed in order to insure victory, to "break" the villages that were to be attacked.

782 When rain failed to come, the Moro Naba would go to the hillock at Koumbé /sic/-Padanda, and have the head of the quarter offer a sacrifice (beef, sheep, chicken) to secure rain. If rain refused to come, the bara were consulted once more, and sacrifices were offered until it came.

●776 The Mossi also have a sky god whom they call Ounam as well
782 as Naba Ouendé or Naba Ouondé, meaning "Sun Chief." This is a
794 trace of the sun cult, which is unusual in Black West Africa, all opinions to the contrary notwithstanding. /590/ The majority of the Mossi sacrifice much more to ancestors and to the Earth than to Naba Ouondé, who is to them a somewhat remote god.

794 It must be added that Lieutenant Desplagnes found among the
782 Mossi an esoteric cult of the sun, moon, and fire, which is peculiar to religious initiates (Ouango) whom we shall mention later.

"The Hougho-Ouango of the Mossi (among the Mossi, those priests reside in the villages of Boujema, Mani, Kondogho, Yolo, and Tio) sacrifice to the sun in order to bind it to the Earth. They do this morning and evening, sunrise and sunset, during the first week of the winter season, and every six days in the morning at sunrise thereafter.
[778] They also go to altars made of three conical stones and offer sacrifices and libations, always surrounded by the populace, family heads, drummers, and familial masks (ouango).

794 "Those priests tend the sacred fire throughout the year in a
372 small, highly adorned recess dug into one of their house walls. At
783 the end of the rainy season they will use it to light the great purifying bush fires.

794 "They perform sacrifices at every new moon, and they have
782 seven important feasts a year for their divinity. Finally, during the solar festivities, they use a cow's tail to tie down the sun to the earth and to bind its life-giving heat." (Le Plateau central nigérien /The Central Nigerian Plateau/, pages 275 and 276.)

nigérien /The Central Nigérian Plateau/, pages 275 and 276.)

The Mossi sacrifice to evil spirits (kinkirga in the singular, kinkirsi in the plural). In Mossi villages, when the cold weather begins, the oldest man in the village performs a sacrifice to avert the wrath of evil spirits. These are indeed fearsome, for among other things they cause the storms, the fierce winds that lay flat the millet and maize. Those spirits usually live in the bush and inhabit in particular the kankalra trees (lenga in Mandé), to which the Mossi offer sacrifices but whose leaves they nevertheless eat. There are Mossi who can see the kinkirsi and who have fights with them.

Now, let us say a word about the priestly organization of the Mossi.

/591/ First of all, among the Mossi as among other Blacks, there are soothsayers and makers of grigris. The soothsayers are called bara and the grigri makers timisoba, meaning "grigri chiefs," from timi, "grigri" and soba, "chief." This is exactly the same word formation as that of basitigui in Bambara.

Prior to the French occupation there were considerable numbers of bara among the Mossi, at least one for every village. Since the arrival of the Whites, however, they are much fewer. The bara disclose things with the aid of some earth. Since they only charge a few cowries for a consultation, they till the soil during the winter season and even work at a trade during the dry season, for example at shoemaking or weaving. They teach the bara's calling to their children.

The timisoba, although less numerous than the bara, do not make a living by making grigris either. They, too, till the soil and work at a trade. They only make grigris on order and do not make them up in advance.

The timisoba goes into the bush and cuts out the roots of certain trees. He burns them and puts the charcoal in bags which he hangs either inside or outside his hut. This charcoal is or becomes grigri. In order to make other objects into grigris, he reduces the charcoal to powder, mixes it with karité butter, and marks with it all the objects he wishes to make into grigris, such as cow's tails, deer horns, sheep horns, etc. This charcoal powder is put to all sorts of uses. The timisoba even mixes it with his millet flour and eats it.

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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rulers left the Dagomba region in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) during the 11th century and moved into the bend of the Niger River, carving out three large kingdoms and smaller principalities in the process. At the head of these still extant kingdoms are rulers (*Moro Nabas*) who hold feudal-like control of the provinces, districts, and villages which comprise their domains. A complex hierarchical administrative apparatus extends the power of the rulers into the smallest village, and funnels taxes and tribute back to them. French conquest modified this highly efficient system but did not greatly change it. The Mossi state apparatus rests on an economy which produces cotton cloth, horses, sheep, cattle, and goats, but the main support of this large population—one of the densest in the Sudan—is grain agriculture. Today, some Mossi districts still have as many as 70 persons per square mile.

The Mossi are divided into stratified royal, noble, and commoner patrilineages. Characteristic of this lineage system is a process by which royal sublineages descend serially until they merge with the mass of commoner lineages. Below the lineages there were once large non-Mossi groups of serfs and slaves, but these people have now been grouped into lineages and have become Mossi. Patrilocal polygynous extended family households, grouped into villages, form the basic Mossi settlement pattern. Marriages are arranged between unrelated persons through the agency of lineage members who establish "friendly" relationships. The two friends might ask their lineage heads for women to exchange as wives, or the "friend" who has received more gifts from his opposite number will give over a wife. Because only the older men have women and goods at their disposal, they are usually the ones who receive wives. The result is that most young men have no wives and must content themselves with occasional lovers until they inherit wives from lineage members. The Mossi have a great fear of incestuous relations which bring down the wrath of the ancestors (the *Keemsé*).

Ancestor veneration is at the core of Mossi religious behavior. The recent ancestors are notified, through sacrifices, of the important events in the lives of their descendants, and they are expected to aid in solving everyday problems. The ancestors also invoke their sanctions against antisocial behavior among their descendants. Once a year the Mossi people, in concert with the Moro Nabas, appeal to their individual and collective ancestors for good crops, large families, and for the preservation of the dynasty. Often associated with the ancestors as propitiatory agents are local deities called *Tengkougas* (sing. *Tenkougre*) or earth shrines, visibly manifested by clumps of trees, mountains, rocks, or rivers. *Tengsobas* or earth priests appeal to the Tengkougas on behalf of the local populations for help in sickness, for rain and good crops, and for children. When proper sacrifices are offered to the Tengkougas, their spiritual agents, called *kinkirsé*, enter the wombs of women and are born as children. Twins and children who die young are regarded as "evil" kinkirsé who entered a woman without being invited. Nevertheless, many persons consider twins as special gifts to parents in favor of the earth deities.

The earth itself, *Tenga*, is one of the principal deities of the Mossi. Tenga is

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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776 considered the wife of a male deity called *Winnam*, *Windé*, or *Naba Zidiwindé*. The true nature of Winnam is not clear. The Mossi say: "Winnam is the sun, and Winnam is God"; he is considered a sun god as well as a supreme deity. [775] Winnam is venerated but he is not feared, because it is the dead ancestors who chastise evil-doers by affliction or death. When wicked people die they face the wrath of the ancestors in *Keemsétenga*, or land of the ancestors.

774 The Mossi have several concepts of the spiritual essence or animating principle of man. First there is the *seega* (pl. *seesé*), an entity found in all living beings; it leaves the body during sleep, and its adventures provide the dreams of men. The seega can be captured during its nocturnal wanderings or in places [761] where large crowds congregate. If the seega is captured and eaten by a sorcerer, its owner will die. A man's shadow is also called his seega; persons about to die have no shadows, since their seesé have either been stolen or have [822] left on their own account.

775 Another principle called the *keema* (pl. *keemsé*) is associated with the dead or with persons about to die. The keema of a dying man wanders around and often frightens people; as soon as he is dead, he is no longer referred to by name but is called the "keema." Keemsé is also the word used for the generalized [769] ancestors who sanction the behavior of the living and who must be placated if people wish to have enough food, wives, children, and good health. A man's own keemsé take a vital interest in his affairs, in return for which they receive nourishment in the form of the seesé (animals do not have keemsé) of sacrificed animals.

[827] The breath, called *vousem*, is also considered an animating principle by the Mossi and, since it leaves the body through the nose at death, they believe that a man's nose is the first thing to die. It is not clear how the seega is disposed of when the body dies. Some people say it remains forever about the haunts of man; others believe that it goes to a mountain called Plimpikou and disappears into a cavern. Still others believe that the seega becomes the keema and goes to Plimpikou, from whence the keemsé come to visit their descendants. It is difficult to determine whether the Mossi have always been vague about their traditional religious concepts or whether this uncertainty is the result of the influx of such foreign creeds as Islam and Christianity.

175 The first recorded contact between the Mossi and Moslems took place around 1328 when the Yatenga Mossi attacked, burned, and sacked Timbuktu, 797 then held by the Dia dynasty of the Songhoi (Dubois 1896:251). For more than a century afterward, the Mossi pursued a turbulent and aggressive policy in the region of the Niger bend, pushing as far as Gourma, Walata, and Banku (ibid:127). They were finally defeated and routed by Sonni Ali in 1477. In 1499, when Askia the Great (El Hadj Mohammed ben Abou Bekr, usurper of the Songhoi throne from the Sonni dynasty in 1494) returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca, he launched a *jihad* or holy war on the Mossi who had rejected his ultimatum to adopt Islam. Askia defeated the Mossi, "devastated the towns and countryside, took men, women, and children as prisoners, and forcibly converted these captives to Islam" (Dubois 1896:127–128). The

knew that Boukary Koutou was the only person capable of such a conspiracy. Fearing for their lives if they did not nominate him, they immediately sent a messenger to summon him as the successful candidate.[15] Under normal circumstances, however, there was no coercion of the ministers and the nominee was quietly brought to the councillors.

Wearing a pair of trousers and a sheepskin mantle and carrying a spear in each hand, the nominee entered the courtyard of the compound through the women's door.[16] He was preceded by the Samande. Nabila, who sprinkled the earth with water. He came up to the councillors and saluted them, and the Ouidi Naba addressed him as follows: "Before your father [brother] died, did he designate you to be his successor?" The nominee replied, "No, Sire! My father has left you free to choose whom you wish, be he a blind man or a leper!" This question was asked three times, and the nominee responded three times. The Ouidi Naba then made the following declaration: "I am giving you the nam of your father and grandfathers. You must try to conduct yourself as they did when they had the nam." The Ouidi Naba then listed the names of the territories over which the ruler had absolute power and authority. The new monarch raised his two spears in the air, made a speech in which he announced three guiding principles by which he vowed to reign, and "named a name," that is, suggested the title by which he wished to be known. For example, Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–57) said in his inaugural speech: "Without rain, there is no life. I will be like rain for the country." He then became known as Mogho Naba Sagha ("Rain"), a rather fitting title for a ruler in a country with uncertain rainfall. The present Mogho Naba stressed in his inaugural speech (in 1957) that he was "solid as a rock." His official title is now Mogho Naba Kougri ("Rock").[17]

The taking of a new name was only the first step in the elaborate process through which a man became Mogho Naba. Next, the Ouidi Naba took the two spears from the new monarch and removed his sheepskin mantle. Then he gave him his new white clothes, which included a pair of trousers, a bonnet, and a sleeveless robe, all made for him by the people of the Sculougou ward in the capital. Next, he was given a cushion made by the people of Baramimi. The Baloum Naba then took the closely guarded namtibo, the sacred amulets of the dynasty, and used them in the preparation of a potion of millet beer mixed with millet-flour water, part of which was poured as a libation to the earth goddess, Tenga.[18] The ruler and the assembled ministers all partook of the potion in a kind of communion. The ministers then shook the ruler's hand, an act thereafter forbidden, and departed for their own compounds. The newly elected

warriors as El Hadj Omar and Samory Touré surprised and puzzled many of their early visitors. Binger explains it as follows:

> Thanks to the primitive tribes that surrounded them like a rampart, the Mossi were spared the incursions of their powerful neighbors. This immunity cannot last much longer, because [Mogho Naba] Sanum is weak, has little spirit, and is badly counseled.[8]

Binger was partly correct in attributing the immunity of the Mossi to the presence of weaker groups on their borders. To the military adventurers of the period, the Mossi must have appeared invulnerable when compared to their weaker neighbors. Nevertheless, the Mossi declare that it was their vigilance and willingness to fight that prevented Samory Touré, among others, from invading their country.[9] They claim to have captured and executed nine of the ten spies he sent to survey their territory. The one spy who returned allegedly told Samory Touré that the Mossi were too strong to be attacked, because they banded together against all outsiders.

Crozat attributes the Mossi freedom from attack to miraculous and magical factors:

> There is widespread belief in surrounding territories that Mossi country is inviolable. Alone amid the troubled populations that surround it, it enjoys relative peace. It owes this to the very special protection of a deity, and also to the virtues of the special talismans owned by the ruler of Ouagadougou. The terror inspired by these charms is such that some years ago the leader of Gadiari's column suffered a mass desertion of his men when he tried to lead them to the conquest of Mossi country. He himself was killed, perhaps by his own *sofas* [soldiers]. This case cannot be expected to undermine belief in these presumptuous charms.[10]

This statement, like Binger's, contains an element of truth, but not in the way that Crozat believed. The Ouagadougou kingdom did have a series of ritual pacts with neighboring Mossi and non-Mossi groups. Crozat found that Mogho Naba Sanum was on "good terms" with the people of Fada-N'Gourma. He tells us that this friendship was maintained by a "curious custom" whereby the Ouagadougou ruler sent wives, captives, and horses from his predecessor's estate to the ruler of the Gurmanche.[11] Similarly, Pinchon, a British officer stationed in the Gold Coast at the beginning of the century, reports that there existed an ancient pact between the Mossi and the Mamprusi. This pact kept the ruler of each country from attacking the other on pain of death by the ancestors. Like the pact between the Mossi and the Gurmanche, this agreement was sanctioned by an annual gift of a horse, slaves, and cloth from the Mossi to the Mamprusi. Pinchon speculates that it was the existence of this pact that induced the Mamprusi

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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ruler to grant asylum to Mogho Naba Wobogo in 1897. He adds that it was probably the injunction in the pact that they should never meet which prevented the ruler from personally receiving Wobogo.[18]

A ritual pact also bound the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou to the ruler of Dagomba. He sent him goods from the estate of the previous Mogho Naba as well as gifts for yearly sacrifices on the grave of Nyennega, the Mossi progenitrix. There are reports that the Ouagadougou ruler also exchanged annual presents with the Ashanti ruler, but it is not known whether these were courtesy gifts or goods sanctioning ritual pacts.

The ritual pacts among Mossi kingdoms and between them and their neighbors appear to have derived from actual or putative kinship ties. This seems to be supported not only by the traditions of the Mossi but also by those of the surrounding peoples. Whatever their origin, these pacts seem to have afforded their beneficiaries a remarkable degree of freedom from external aggression. It is possible that the Mossi and their neighbors really believed in the efficacy of supernatural sanctions, for purposes of mutual protection. But one suspects that it was the relative weakness of these various groups that caused them to rely on supernatural agencies rather than military might for protection. As will be pointed out below, the Mossi (and probably all of their important neighbors) had considerable difficulty in building and maintaining a fighting force sufficiently large to wage protracted or large-scale wars against foreign groups.

The Mossi kingdoms seldom fought among themselves, although their leaders quarreled over status and committed aggression against each other's territories. For example, the Ouagadougou rulers, who claimed suzerainty over Yatenga, often tried to impose their will on that kingdom. Yet, although they were usually rebuffed by the Yatenga Naba, they never tried to resolve the issue by force of arms. In fact, even when a Yatenga ruler appears to have given the Mogho Naba just cause for war, little fighting actually took place. Several times the Yatenga rulers seized such principalities as Riziam and Yako, which were dependent on Ouagadougou, but in no case did the Ouagadougou rulers wage war against them. In 1890, Crozat witnessed Mogho Naba Wobogo's attempt to stop a war between Yatenga and Yako. The Yako people wanted to obey their sovereign and stop the war, but the Yatenga monarch refused to do so.[19]

Crozat attributes the ineffectiveness of the Mogho Naba's authority over brother kingdoms to the fact that he had no standing army with which to enforce his rule. While relative strength may have been and probably was the main reason for the Mogho Naba's lack of aggressiveness, the ritual pact that prevented the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou from meeting the

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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For example, the villagers of Barkago traditionally cultivated and harvested a field of millet behind his compound for the chief. The people of Pinse, Donse, Passingtenga, and Tewarka cultivated millet for him in their own villages, and those of Togose and Basbedo cultivated rice for him in their excellent lowlands.

The district chief had fields both behind his compound and in the bush, which were cultivated for him by his retainers, serfs, and slaves. More than the Mogho Naba and the provincial ministers, the district chief believed that a Moaga must perform agricultural work during the planting season; to show his interest in farming, he often personally supervised the work on his plantations. When the task of weeding or harvesting proved too much for his own people, he asked his villages for a *sosogha*. On that day, each village chief, accompanied by his men, went to the district chief's fields, where, to the accompaniment of drums and chants and with the verbal encouragement of district administrators, the villages vied with each other in their task. The district chief usually sat under a tree and watched the proceedings and occasionally visited the various contingents to observe the progress made. Toward evening, the chief's wives gave the workers large quantities of food and drink in compensation for their services.

Like the Mogho Naba, the district chief had officials who collected taxes on commodities sold in local markets. These district market officials were usually serfs, Gurunsi captives, or bondsmen from other populations. Mossi rarely served in such capacities because many of the local market places were considered ritually dangerous, and their titular deities, the Tengkouga, were believed to wreak vengeance on market officials who were tardy with sacrifices. The local Kos Naba supervised the slaughtering of every animal killed in the market, kept its skin so that its ownership could be verified if necessary, and collected taxes from the butchers in the form of meat or cowries. The Raga Naba of the district was not as strict as his counterpart in Ouagadougou, and seldom imposed formal taxes on the traders. He usually walked around the market, trailed by the chief's servants, and seized calabashes of grain and other commodities, which he placed in the servants' baskets. The Raga Naba did not tax those itinerant traders or caravaneers who visited the markets in the district, nor did he interfere with them in any other way. These merchants usually had business and personal relations with the chief, and he himself handled revenue from this source. The merchants gave him goods from the forest and Sahara regions, and he in turn often gave them wives, who were thus taken out of the district.

The Mossi district chief was always on the lookout for new sources of revenue, and thus welcomed strangers into his district because they "in-

[P.126]

VIII

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

796
642 RELIGION AND RITUAL played an important role in supporting and preserv-
[769] ing the Mossi political system. Religio-political ceremonies were centered
around the ancestors (Keemse) and the earth deities (Tengkouga); the
[776] otiose high god (Ouennam or Naba Zid Ouende) had a very minor role.

769 The political importance of ancestor veneration lay in the fact that every
Mossi chief claimed Nyennega of Dagomba and her descendants, Ouedra-
642 ogo and Oubri, as his ancestors. Furthermore, possession of the amulets of
778 Rialle, Nyennega's husband and Ouedraogo's father, legitimized possession
[613] of the nam. In order to rule, a Moaga had either to be a member of a royal
lineage still in possession of the nam or to have received the nam from such
669 a lineage. No Moaga ever tried to usurp the nam of a kingdom or princi-
778 pality without trying to steal the royal amulets at the same time; nor, if his
642 rebellion was successful, did he ever fail to claim that he had stolen the
769 amulets or had received them as a gift. Thus Yadega, who rebelled against
his father's brother, Mogho Naba Koudoumie, and founded the Yatenga
kingdom, declared that he had obtained Rialle's amulets. He claimed that
they had been given to him by his sister, Pabre, who had stolen them from
Ouagadougou and had thus deprived that kingdom of any legitimate sanc-
tions for power. Thus, when the Yatenga people declare that they are equal
to Ouagadougou, they add that the only "amulets" that still legitimize the
nam of the Ouagadougou dynasty are the droppings left behind by Pabre's
horse as she fled northward.

769 Similarly, all the princes who founded principalities and proclaimed
642 their independence of Ouagadougou defended their action on the grounds
643 that they, being as close to the main line of descent as the Mogho Naba,
were also entitled to rule. The younger sons of deceased Mogho Nanamse
[631] who were banished from the capital as Kouritadamba and who subse-
quently became provincial Dimdamba also stressed their relationship to
[634] the royal ancestors. Even those district chiefs whose ancestors had prob-

pleted, the remainder of the ceremony followed the pattern of the Ouagadougou ritual.

During the weeks that followed, the village chiefs and the heads of the larger lineage segments all offered sacrifices to their ancestors. The Poughtiema of each prominent local administrator, chief, or lineage head prepared and poured the millet water as a libation to the ancestors. Whenever possible, each of these personages invited musicians to sing praises to his ancestors. He dressed in his best robe and sat outside his hut to receive presents from his relatives, friends, and subjects, along with their best wishes for the new year, and for long life and prosperity. In return he gave them kola nuts, beer, and food. Thus, in celebrating the Basgha, all the Mossi were united in prayers and supplications to the ancestors, upon whom rested the future of their country and the successful reign of the descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri.

The earth deity, Tenga, held the central place in the second major religio-political ceremony which linked all Mossi. This ritual, called *Tense* (from *tenga*, "earth") and sometimes *Naba Oubri ma koure* ("the anniversary of the funeral of Mogho Naba Oubri's mother"), was so important to Mossi cohesion that it was banned by the French, and as a result its main features are now unclear. According to tradition, Naba Oubri loved Poughtoenga, his Ninisi mother, so much, and was so pleased with the elaborate funeral he gave her, that he decided to repeat this ceremony each year in the hope that his subjects would be blessed with the bountiful crops and herds which had made the first one possible. Curiously enough, Oubri's mother was not a central figure in the Tense celebration. Instead, great stress was placed on the fructifying powers of the earth and on the importance of the royal ancestors in Mossi life. The juxtaposition and association of the earth deity with Oubri's mother has important implications for the Mossi political organization. Mossi tradition holds that a Ninisi woman was the ancestress of the Mossi of Ouagadougou. Her people probably celebrated the Tense as a fertility rite to their earth goddess, Tenga. The Mossi apparently took over the ceremony and used it both as a fertility rite and as a memorial festival, thus symbolically uniting the conquerors and the conquered.[3]

In contrast to the Basgha, no special date appears to have been set for the celebration of the Tense. It was held sometime before the crops were sowed, but according to Tauxier it was not celebrated at all in Ouagadougou when the previous year's harvest had been poor.[4] Before setting the date for the festival, the Mogho Naba summoned the Larhalle Naba and ordered him to have sacrifices made on the graves of all former rulers. This minister

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[Pre-World War II Period]

What Mangin referred to euphemistically as "difficulties with the white man" was, to the Mossi, rather drastic punishment for non-payment of taxes. If a man refused to pay his taxes, the Mossi chief was permitted to sequester his goods and sell them. If the man had neither the taxes nor the goods, the chief had to send him and his wife (or wives) to the administrative post to be punished. Sometimes, a man and his wife would be made to look at the sun from sunrise to sunset while intoning the prayer *Ouennam co mam ligidi* ("God, give me money"). Other times, a man would be made to run around the administrative post with his wife on his back; if he had several wives, he had to take each one in turn. Then his wife or wives had to carry him around. The Mossi claim that a man had to run around the post three times, and his wife four. This is probably an exaggeration, however, because the numbers 3 and 4 are symbolically associated with men and women, respectively.

A further source of difficulty for the Mossi chiefs, and one which became more serious as time went by, was that they were charged by the administration to recruit men for both labor and military service. Initially, the chiefs had to supply men to transport grain for the French-organized agricultural societies from one region to another; later, they were commanded to supply labor for private and public works. Labouret states:

> The initial recruitment, which took place in 1912, was carried out without any difficulty, thanks to the unexpected afflux of volunteers. This was not the case in subsequent years. The reason for this was that the credulous natives of these distant regions, lacking any contact with the world, believed that the Europeans were carrying off their most robust youths to sell them to the Men of the Sea [mythical cannibalistic beings].[13]

The Mossi were alarmed at the high rate of mortality among the young men who went away to work. They had a saying, *Nansara toumde di Mossi* ("White man's work eats [kills] people"), and resisted the recruiting attempts of their chiefs. There was, however, less opposition to recruitment for military service, owing in part to the Mossi tradition of warfare. Many Mossi youths served in France during World War I, and additional hundreds served in an African contingent recruited "by an administrator named d'Arboussier, and with the cooperation of the Mogho Naba, to take possession of northern Togoland."[14]

The manner in which the Mossi chiefs administered their territories before the First World War was conditioned by the colonial administrators even when it was not directly controlled by them. The Mogho Naba had gradually lost most of his power, and he had no authority to act without the specific authorization of the French. He retained most of his cere-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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plaintiffs gave the chiefs the traditional presents of a white cock and a sack containing from 200 to 1,000 cowries.

6. Mangin declares: "Most of the troubles which arise between one Mossi and another derive from their wives and from their debts; yet it may not be said, as a general rule, that women are unhappy or ill treated" (p. 39; see also p. 33). But cf. Dim Delobson, pp. 182, 185.

7. Mangin states that in Koupela a recidivous thief was "led to the market place with a rope around his neck; he was supplied with an abundance of meat and beer, and then clubbed to death at the foot of a tree" (p. 25). I doubt whether this practice was very widespread, because the Mossi were afraid to anger the market Tengkouga (earth spirits) by spilling blood in the market place.

8. Cf. Ruelle, pp. 679 ff.

9. Binger, I, 462.

10. But cf. Marc, p. 134.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Sa'di, pp. 45–46. The date of this battle and the location of Benka are unknown. However, Delafosse (II, 141) believes that it was located in the Massina region on the shores of Lake Debo.

2. Sa'di, pp. 112–13.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 121–23. The chronicle also states (p. 168) that these Mossi captives were installed in a special ward of Askia's capital, a practice apparently followed by all victorious Sudanese groups including the Mossi.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

6. See Delafosse, II, 143–45, and Tauxier, *Le Noir du Yatenga*, pp. 88–91.

7. Crozat, p. 4822.

8. Binger, I, 502.

9. Almamy Samory Touré was the last empire-builder in the western Sudan. He was defeated by the French in 1898 and exiled to Gabon, where he died in 1900. See Binger, I, 84ff.

10. Crozat, p. 4837.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 4849.

12. Archives, Document 1G-315 (1903–1904).

13. Crozat, p. 4849.

14. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 463.

15. Mangin, p. 13.

16. Cheron, "Contribution," pp. 655, 675–76.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 673.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 676.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 654.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 685–86.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 674.

22. Ruelle, p. 686.

23. Mangin, p. 62.

24. Binger, I, 473.

25. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 660.

26. Crozat, p. 4849.

27. Mangin, p. 12.

28. For example, when Mogho Naba Sanum's army attacked Boussouma, it made "such a rapid retreat" that Ligidi, the Boussouma Dim, could only counterattack the army's rear guard (Cheron, "Contribution," p. 676).

29. Archives, Document 15G-190 (1897–98).

30. Mangin, p. 12.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Dim Delobson, p. 21.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

34. Cf. Southall (pp. 246–60) for a discussion of the "segmentary" state in Africa.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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443 This man then consults a teng-
287 *soba* (earth priest) who must be also a *barga* (soothsayer) to find out
[791] where in a certain area it would be most propitious to locate the new
market. After the *tengsoba* has ascertained the number and nature of
[776] the *tengkouga* (earth deities, plural of *Tengkougri*) in the designated
spot, he tells the *Raga Naba* what type of sacrifice would be appropri-
443 ate. A few days later the *Raga Naba*, his young assistant and the *teng-*
782 *soba* take *zom kom* (milletflour), *dam* (sorghum beer), and a chicken
(or goat) of the designated color, and go to the new market place.
[776] Here they pick out the stone or three which is the abode of the spirit
or spirits, if there are several of them, and prepare to make the offer-
ing. The *Raga Naba* takes the millet water and pours some on the
ground saying: "Good God, take this water, drink it, and take this
other water (here he pours the beer), and give it to all the *tengkouga*
in the villages so that the market will aways be good and there will be
no fighting in the market!" Then the *Raga Naba* takes the sacrificial
animal, and in the case of a chicken pulls off the neck feathers and
cuts its throat, saying: "Good God, take this chicken and heed all the
prayers of the people of this market!" He releases the chicken and
waits to see whether it will fall on its back, thereby indicating whether
the petition has been accepted. Of course, if it has not been accepted,
a new site is chosen. If the sacrifice has been accepted, then the *Raga*
Naba gives the chicken to his young helper to be cleaned and roasted.
He then prays to the *tengkouga* who live in the market place and
begs them to help with the market. When the boy brings back the
dissected chicken, the *Raga Naba* cuts the liver into two parts; one
for God and the other for the local *tengkouga*. He then says, "Now
that God and the *Tengkouga* have eaten, they should drink," and
forthwith pours out the remainder of the millet water. The *Raga*
Naba then distributes the remainder of the roasted chicken among
those present saying, "*Winnam dege* (God has accepted the sacrifice)."
Only after this ceremony is completed can the market be opened.[9]

443 All Mossi markets, except those which specialize in one type of
366 trading, have the same basic physical structure even though they vary
in size from one-eighth of an acre to as much as four or five acres.
We do not know the size of some of the traditional markets such as
Pouitenga, La, Yako, Dakay, Belousa, Mane, and Tema, but we have
Crozat's report that "The market at Wagadougou, which is found
at Kounkounbissi, the royal residence ... is large" (Crozat 1891 :
4848). Since the market at Wagadougou was smaller than some of the
other important ones, we may assume that some of the markets must
have been quite large. At the same time, the physical appurtenances
of Mossi markets are not elaborate, or were not so until today. In the

(9) See Zahan (1954 : 371) and Mangin (1921 : 53).

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customary "taste" with greater frequency and freedom than did ordinary buyers. But the most valuable tax collected by the Raga Naba was on the sale of slaves, whose buyers paid a tax of 1,000 cowries per head.

There is some evidence, mainly from Europeans, that the Mossi occasionally may have found the market taxes prohibitive. Binger reports that during his visit to the Mossi in 1888, the high taxes exacted by the Moro Naba were "one of the causes which placed Wagadougou in second place [as a market town] and which made Mane the commercial capital of Mossi country" (Binger 1892 : 467). Binger, himself, was caught in the institutionalized gift system and wrote sarcastically: "The day of the market [at Wagadougou] the receipts are good. People bring every-thing to the palace including millet as well as hoes or peanuts, and everything is accepted. *All this giving is left to the generosity of the customers . . .*" (Binger 1892 : 465) (his italics). Even so, one cannot be sure that the Mossi felt the same way about paying taxes to their rulers as Binger felt. There is, incidentally, always an air of mutual recriminations among the Mossi and their rulers about the level of reciprocation between them. The people admit that the chiefs are indispensable; yet they complain that they are greedy—they "eat" too much. The chiefs insist that it is difficult to rule a territory and complain that the people are ungrateful.

SOCIAL AND RITUAL ASPECTS OF THE MARKETPLACE

Although the offices of Kos Naba and Raga Naba have been abolished officially, these officials still exist in many Mossi districts, and even when they do not exist, some men acting in their stead appropriate commodities in the markets for the chiefs. Furthermore, the *nakomce* (plural of *nabiga*—chief's child) or nobles still wander about the market places taking handfuls of kola nuts, peanuts and everything they need without the people becoming angry or complaining to the French about it. Once when I visited a market in the company of a *nabiga*, the local Raga Naba came up to where we were buying meat and indicated to the butcher that one of his customers was a *nabiga* and that he should treat him accordingly. It is not because of ignorance that the market people continue to grant these privileges to the nobles and the chiefs, but rather because they believe that only the market officials, and not the Europeans, can take care of the markets.

One of the most important tasks of the Raga Naba (or in the absence of this official, the Kos Naba) is to propitiate the *tengkouga* in the market place, or supervise the sacrifices which the *tengsobas* make to them. The task of the market spirits is believed to be so difficult—

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443 554 776 782 due to the bickering, quarreling and even fighting they have to prevent by cooling the tempers of the market people—that they become quite angry. When the spirits are not satisfied, they fail in their tasks and real trouble breaks out in the market, disrupting the trading; and if they are not pacified they may even cause the death of the market officials.[12]

In the days before the market officials were banned, these sacrifices were performed regularly. At that time the Raga Naba simply asked the Kos Naba to seize the appropriate animal in the market to perform [648] the rite. The problem today is that since the French have abolished the office of Raga Naba, and in some districts have prevented the chief from even naming one secretly, the markets in the latter local- [208] ities are considered "dangerous markets." Once a market acquires such a reputation, people do not like to visit it because they fear that they would get into fights or quarrels. Not only this, but it is believed that if a market has been without a Raga Naba for a long time, the *tengkouga* there become so angry for being neglected that they kill [123] the first chief appointed to it. This was the reality or belief behind a series of misadventures of which I was the victim.

123 443 554 656 I had spent an entire day in a market, and on returning home could not find my pen. The next morning I sent an assistant to the chief telling him about the loss and asking him to have an announcement made in the market on the next market day that I would pay a handsome reward to whomever should find and deliver the pen. The chief sent back a reply saying that since there was no Raga Naba, he would have the Kos Naba acquaint the people with my loss. On the day of the market, I waited until midday, when most of the people had arrived, and then went to see whether the Kos Naba had any news of the pen. I checked with several of my friends to see whether they had heard about the pen and discovered, to my chagrin, that no an- [564] nouncement had been made about it. I went and told the Kos Naba that the people were not hearing about the pen and suggested that one way to do so would be to have the Binderes (drummers and griots) circulate through the market announcing the loss. The Kos Naba refused to do this, and when I enlisted the aid of the chief's secretary, he, too, said that it could not be done because there was no Raga Naba. I had some notes on the institution of the Raga Naba, but as I did not know everything about it, I was, therefore, frankly puzzled

(12) Zahan (1954 : 371) states that "the place where all kinds of merchandise accumulate and where strangers come is a place charged with forces. In time, these forces build up to such a point within the precincts of the market that some purifications are necessary to liberate them. To omit making them would expose the participants to excitements leading to brawls and compromising the place of the transactions."

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and a bit peeved at not being able to put my idea into practice. I next sought the advice and consolation of an elder noble who listened quite calmly and then said: "The customs of these kafirs (heathens) are foolish." Being a Moslem, my friend was very often critical of the pagans, and could be relied upon to explain why their customs were "foolish." He said that in former days the Raga Naba would have climbed a tree and announced to the crowd any message from the district chief. Moreover, he was the custodian of all lost articles and restored them to their owners. The Moslem said that my request could not be granted because there was no Raga Naba, and that probably there would never be another. When the French first banned the institution, the local chief dismissed the Raga Naba. With the passage of years, however, the market became so dangerous that the chief tried to appoint another ex-serf to the job. This man soon died, and his successor died shortly after being appointed. Since that time the chief has made no attempt to name a new market chief.

With this new knowledge I called my aide and inquired from him whether this information was true and if so, why did he not tell me the true state of affairs. His reply was that he did not wish to say that the market was bad because the local people believed that they had solved the problem of the lack of a Raga Naba. When the last Raga Naba died, the chief decided not to name a new one, but in order to placate the market *tengkouga*, he ordered his *tengsoba* to make sacrifices to it. It was believed that these sacrifices would be acceptable as long as the officiant did not bear the title of Raga Naba. The other functions of the Raga Naba, such as collecting goods for the chief and preserving peace in the market, were taken over by the Kos Naba and another servant of the chief. However, the Kos Naba had to be careful lest he overstep his authority in such a way as would acquaint the *tengkouga* with the real situation. In my case, the chief was acting by trying to get the Kos Naba to acquaint the people with my loss in as inconspicuous a manner as possible. The consensus was that the Kos Naba would have risked his life had he made any kind of announcement to the market people, because the *tengkouga* would have thought that he was the new Raga Naba, and if not contented with the people would have killed him. Under these circumstances, I withdrew my request. I discovered later that my pen was not lost but had been in the hut all the time.

Those chiefs who have succeeded in retaining their market officials even secretly have been able to maintain their control over public behavior there. The Mossi are fairly law-abiding despite the persistence among them of a warrior tradition. Every man who goes to market, or anywhere for that matter, usually carries a baton over his

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When a woman has a number of stillbirths or
845 loses her children when they are still babies, however, it is believed
761 than these children were embodiments of the same *kinkirsi* (spirits)
776 who must be tricked into remaining on earth when it returns, and
443 the market place is chosen as the site for this trickery. As soon as such
851 a woman gives birth to a child, and old woman places it in a basket
443 and on the next market day takes it to the market place. Her intention is to "sell" the child in the hope that it would not die if owned by someone other than its mother. The old woman walks around the market place shouting: "I have something to sell!" Invariably a man will walk up to her, and after ascertaining the contents of the basket, offer to buy it. The price varies with the fortune of the man, but traditionally the amount paid has been 500 cowries or their equivalent. The man takes the child for a few minutes and then returns it to its vendor, telling her in a loud voice so that the kinkirsi will hear: "I would like you to give this child to 'X' (the child's mother) to be reared for me and I will pay for its upbringing and will come
[551] for the child in a few years. He then gives the child the name *Yamba*
[553] (slave), or *Yemdaogo* (male slave) if male and *Yempoko* (female slave) if a girl. The old woman then returns the child to its mother, relating what has passed in the market and indicating who the "owner" of her child is. The "owner" of the child may not even see the child again, and naturally does not take this ownership seriously. In many cases the money with which he bought the child was given to him by the child's father.

852 The market also plays an important part in the circumcision and
443 incision ceremonies of Mossi boys and girls. For about two to three months after the actual operations the young children, especially the boys are secluded in the circumcision lodges or compounds and have almost no contact with the village population. Their re-introduction to society always takes place on the great market day. The parents of the children buy new clothing for them this occasion, and on the appointed day the boys or girls parade together in the market and are offered gifts by the market people. Later in the day, they are dismissed and individually feted by their relatives.

585 Owing to the relatively unceremonious nature of Mossi marriages,
76 the market does not play a role in Mossi weddings. However, the
554 same thing cannot be said about the last important *rite de passage*,
443 especially the funeral of a chief, or important elder. Prior to the intervention of the French, and to a lesser extent even today, the announcement of the death of an important ruler was seen as the breakdown of law and order and was ritually dramatized by a popular raid
[565] on the markets throughout the territories (Skinner : ms). During the interregnum the vendors are subject to constant raids by members of